

Legislative Updates

Budget Envisions Alarming Tax Increases

The majority party in Congress recently passed the fiscal year 2009 budget, legislation that establishes overall spending and revenue levels for the federal government over the next five years. I opposed this legislation because it calls for: (1) an increase in the marginal tax rate on all income levels; (2) an increase in the marriage penalty and the reinstatement of the estate tax; (3) an increase in taxes on investment income, which would negatively affect millions of seniors; and (4) a \$500 per child tax increase. In total, the budget envisions an unprecedented \$683 billion in higher taxes. The average California household would send an extra \$3,331 of their money to Washington. I strongly oppose increasing taxes on the American people. I believe the tax burden is already too high, and Congress should focus on policies to reform government and reduce federal spending so we can reduce the tax burden and allow Americans to keep more of what they earn.

Equally troubling, the majority's budget does not address the looming crisis in entitlement spending, which goes toward programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Funding amounts for entitlements are automatically set based upon the amount of eligible recipients, as opposed to annual appropriations bills passed by Congress. Our nation's future debt goes up by \$2 trillion each year Congress does nothing to address this situation. As this [chart](#) shows, without reform, our three largest entitlement programs will keep growing until they crowd out everything else in the federal budget, from national defense to transportation and homeland security. We cannot afford to ignore this problem any longer.

For these reasons, I supported the alternative Republican budget, which would prevent further tax increases while also restraining the growth of Medicare and Medicaid to preserve these programs for future generations of Americans. These steps would help ensure that our children and grandchildren are left with a stronger America. Although the House did not approve this budget alternative, I will continue to oppose any efforts to raise taxes and will advocate responsible reforms to our entitlement programs. [Share your thoughts](#)

Terrorist Surveillance Bill Remains Stalled

Last month, I [reported](#) that the House has failed to pass critical legislation to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), which sets down the process for collecting intelligence on suspicious persons in the United States who may be acting against our nation on behalf of a foreign government. One month later, House leaders are continuing to deny a vote on bipartisan legislation already passed by the Senate that would equip our intelligence community with the tools they need to monitor foreign terrorist suspects, and provide legal protections to U.S. companies that assisted in our nation's intelligence activities after September 11, 2001.

Instead, the House has again passed legislation that falls short of meeting the needs of our intelligence community. This occurred despite a rare secret session of the House during which members discussed classified information that demonstrated the need to pass the Senate measure. [Read more](#)

Our nation's top intelligence leaders have made it clear that the failure to modernize FISA makes our nation less safe. This is a very important issue for the safety and security of the American people, and I am gravely concerned by the heightened risk to our nation caused by further inaction. I will continue to urge House leaders to immediately allow a vote on the Senate-passed legislation. [Share your thoughts](#)

Energy Bill Revisited

The House recently passed [H.R. 5351](#), the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008. The majority brought this legislation to the floor, despite the fact that a very similar measure was met with strong opposition last year and ultimately defeated in the Senate. I [opposed](#)

H.R. 5351, as well as the earlier legislation, because they would impose higher taxes on American energy producers, which would create a significant disincentive for domestic production, increase our dependence on foreign sources of energy, and ultimately lead to higher prices at the pump. While I support diversifying our domestic energy supplies, higher taxes on American manufacturers will not solve our energy crisis. In addition, I objected to a provision in H.R. 5351 that would enable Hugo Chavez's Venezuela-state-owned oil company to claim a U.S. tax deduction. Instead of taking the path set out in this legislation, I believe Congress should take meaningful steps to truly make our nation more energy independent and create the incentives needed to develop more efficient and cost-effective energy supplies for

future generations.

[Share your thoughts](#)

Higher Education Bill a Priority

I recently voted in favor of [legislation](#) that temporarily extended programs under the Higher Education Act (HEA). This action provides Congress more time to complete work on a measure to reauthorize the law for five years and make important improvements to it. HEA is critically important to ensuring that students from all income brackets have access to college, and I support the goal of passing a long-term HEA extension this year. As negotiations go forward, I believe it's important that Congress not include any provision that would micromanage state budgeting decisions. Although I do not serve on the House committee that's working on this legislation, I will continue to monitor the issue closely and hope that strong bipartisan legislation comes to a vote in the near future.

Pending Legislation and Issues Important to Northern CA

Rebate Checks to Begin Arriving in May

You may have recently received notification from the U.S. Department of the Treasury about the upcoming issuance of rebate checks to 130 million Americans. The tax relief was approved by Congress earlier this year and will begin arriving in recipients' mailboxes in May. If you believe you are eligible to receive a check, you will need to fill out a tax return in 2007, even if you don't normally file a tax return. For more information, click [here](#).

Hamas Rocket Attacks Continue

As I [discussed](#) in December, Israeli and moderate Palestinian leaders have renewed their commitment to achieve a historic Middle East peace agreement. Regrettably, however, the terrorist group Hamas recently launched a barrage of rocket attacks against Israel, which understandably responded with the use of force. With my support, the House [condemned](#) the rocket attacks by Hamas that ignited the conflict.

Although the situation has calmed down in recent days, it is difficult to envision enduring peace in the region so long as Hamas denies Israel's right to exist and perpetuates violence. Still, it remains my hope that peace talks between Israel and moderate Palestinian leaders can resume in short time, and that Hamas and like-minded militants will permanently disavow violence against Israel. I will continue to closely monitor this very important peace effort. [Share your thoughts](#)

Court Delivers Victory for U.S. Sovereignty

On March 25, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that nonbinding international treaties do not take precedence over the due process of law in the United States. The case, [Medellin v. Texas](#), arose when a Texas jury convicted Mexican national Jose Medellin of the horrific rape and murder of two young girls. Medellin's lawyers argued that although his guilt was not in question, his conviction should be thrown out because he had not been permitted to contact the Mexican consulate when he was arrested, and an international court had determined that the Vienna Convention guarantees this right for foreign nationals. Yet when the U.S. Senate ratified the Vienna Convention, it did so with a stipulation that the treaty created no new individual rights and would not override the rulings of state courts.

In 2005, the Bush administration directed Texas to comply with the international court. I have heard from a number of Northern Californians who were rightly troubled by the President's position, and I strongly disagreed with it as well. Throwing out Medellin's conviction on the basis of a dubious international court decision would not only have freed a dangerous murderer, but would also have eroded America's national sovereignty. Fortunately, the Supreme Court's ruling clarifies that state courts do not need to defer to the International Court of Justice and that

the President does not have the power to unilaterally order them to do so.

District News

Beale AFB Touted to Key Cyber General



The Air Force is creating a new Cyber Command to help defend our nation against cyber attacks on our nation's computer networks, weapons systems, and financial markets. [Beale Air Force Base](#)

, located in Yuba County, is being considered as the Command's headquarters. I recently met with Major General William T. Lord to discuss why I and many others believe Beale is the ideal location for it.

General Lord is the commander of the provisional Cyber Command located in Louisiana. After meeting with him, I can say with high confidence that Beale Air Force Base is receiving strong consideration. General Lord pointed out that the U-2 and Global Hawk spy planes deployed from Beale already perform important cyber operations. He also noted that California's high-tech Silicon Valley, as well as its university system, could potentially partner with the Air Force in performing cyber operations. Additionally, he stated that he was tremendously impressed by the [unanimous support of California's fifty-five member Congressional delegation in urging](#) the Air Force to consider Beale AFB as headquarters for the Cyber Command, and by the local community's support for the base.

The Air Force is expected to announce finalists for the Cyber Command's permanent headquarters later this year. With bases from eighteen states seeking it, the competition is certainly tough. But as the decision-making process moves forward, I will continue to work closely with Air Force leaders and the local community in promoting the unmatched attributes of California and Beale AFB. [Share your thoughts](#)

Visit with Elementary School Students



I recently had the opportunity to visit with the students of Olivehurst Elementary School in Yuba County. I was able to speak with 5th grade students about my responsibilities as a member of Congress and answer questions they had about the federal government. I was impressed by the questions the students came prepared to ask. I also visited the school's first grade classes and read a book that explains the U.S. Congress in a way that is informative and easily understandable. It is always a pleasure to talk with students throughout Northern California about our government and how Congress works.

Trinity Residents to Get Power Directly

